GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT
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May 3, 1996

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The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 814
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Chairman Hundt:

As a member of the Granite School District Board of Education, I would like to urge the Federal-State Joint Board and the Federal Communications Commission to adopt rules that fully and aggressively implement the universal service provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 for schools and libraries. I also support the comments filed by the National School Boards Association, et. al. Please include my letter in the formal record.

Specifically, I urge the FCC to include for deep discounts a range of telecommunications services that will give Granite District more affordable access to the Internet as well as to the interactive, voice, data and video capability necessary for distance learning. It is imperative that these services be provided directly to the classroom, where the learning actually takes place. I urge the Commission to address the affordability needs of both the capital expenses of services and the ongoing costs.

Granite District provides services to nearly 75,000 students in urban and suburban areas. As the 28th largest school district in the nation, Granite services 62 elementary schools, 15 junior high schools, 9 high schools, and 3 special schools. Presently, our telecommunications technology consists of the following:

(a) Through our mainframe we are connected to all 89 schools, either directly or via modem. Student, financial, and electronic mail services are supported on the mainframe.

(b) We have connected, through T1 lines, many of our school to the Internet and are in the process of completing the T1 connections to all schools.

(c) We also have cable drops to nearly all schools in the district and many of the schools are using educational services on cable.

(d) Additionally, we use fax machines in all high schools and many of the junior high and elementary schools.

(e) Many of our schools have additional modem connections which are used to access information from remote sites.

Our district is interested in acquiring new technology, specifically:

(a) Systems to communicate with parents integrating computer and telephone technology.

(b) Classes and other instructional support that could be accessed via Internet of other systems.

(c) Instructional live action video and more general multimedia that enhances teaching and learning.

(d) The integration of PC's to data that exist in multiple databases at multiple locations, client/server applications for students and staff.

(e) Develop "Intranet" applications allowing the end user to use a web browser and PC platform of choice to access intra-district information, such as training and district documents.

The affordability of technology usage presents several barriers to our district, such as:

(a) Technology money generally comes from legislative-designated funds through our State Office of Education and only amounts to a few thousand dollars per school.

(b) We generally don't have enough money for start-up costs.

(c) It is difficult to cover on-going line costs for technology.

(d) We are short on money for training staff members to use telecommunications appropriately.

(e) We can't afford enough computers and other technology devices to provide appropriate access in the learning environment.

(f) Staff to support and develop using the new technologies that are available.

Our district has benefitted from technology in the following areas:

(a) Greater availability of information in both quality and quantity for learning.

(b) Additional support for teaching the basic skills.

(c) Greater approximation of reality for learning through the use of live action video and other multimedia.

(d) An increase in the level of tool skill achievement by using contemporary word processing, desk top publishing, authoring, presentation, and spread-sheet programs.

(e) Greater technology skill for the workplace by specialized training in multimedia and applied technology classes.

Technology in the classroom is critical to ensuring that our children can succeed in a high-tech world marketplace. I urge the Commission to adopt rules that will help bring the broadest range of educational technology to our schoolchildren.

Sincerely,

Judith A. Larson, Member
Granite Board of Education

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